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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4400

INFO RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5859

RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 9356

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 9484

RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2700

RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0057

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1845

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4708

RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 9324

RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9684

RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 7273

RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 3811

RUEHBBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 8862

RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 4381

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

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RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4241

RHMFIISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6628

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 NEW DELHI 001536

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: BJP COCKY ABOUT UTTAR PRADESH AND DELHI POLL
PROSPECTS

REF: A. NEW DELHI 1273

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 1508

[1](#)C. 06 NEW DELHI 7577

[1](#)D. 06 NEW DELHI 7827

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Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On March 25, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) kicked off its campaign for the upcoming Uttar Pradesh (UP) State Assembly elections with a bang. The BJP is focusing on the UP elections, which start on April 7 with results to be announced May 11, and on April 5 Delhi Municipal elections. In UP, the overconfident BJP has outlined its issues, named its Chief Minister (CM) candidate (Kalyan Singh, CM of UP from 1991-1992 and 1997-1999), and rejected a post-election coalition, claiming it will sail to victory by consolidating the divided Hindu vote. Revitalizing the Ayodhya campaign--to build a temple on the disputed site where Lord Ram (a Hindu God) was purportedly born -- appears to be the latest BJP attempt to revive its anti-"minorityism" strategy (reftel A). The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), however, seems to have a winning list of candidates including Dalits, Muslims, and Brahmins --the three largest voting blocs in UP. This leaves the BJP and SP jostling for second place, with Congress trailing in fourth place. In Delhi, India's always powerful anti-incumbency sentiment all but assures the BJP of victory. After Delhi and UP, the BJP will shift focus to the

next two state elections: Goa and Gujarat, as they traverse the country, plotting a comeback at the Center in the 2009 Parliamentary polls. END SUMMARY

THE BIG FISH: UTTAR PRADESH

¶2. (SBU) On March 25, the BJP made a big splash in UP, launching its campaign for the upcoming State Assembly elections. (Note: Polling across the state will start on April 7th, continuing throughout April, with results announced on May 11. End Note). In meetings across the state, an all-star cast of BJP leaders delivered pledges to rebuild the controversial Ram temple in Ayodhya and attacked the UPA government for "appeasing minorities" and failing to address the rising inflation rate (reftel A). BJP President L.K. Advani is reported as overconfidently stating that "the party would defy all speculations of a hung Assembly by getting an absolute majority." However, of all states, UP --with four major parties and dozens of smaller ones-- is probably the one least likely to deliver a clear majority for any party.

KALYAN SINGH TAPPED TO LEAD

¶3. (U) Two time former Chief Minister of UP and current BJP Vice President Kalyan Singh has been tapped as CM should the BJP form the next UP government. While attacking the SP and Congress on issues of inflation and "Muslim appeasement," the BJP is asking voters to compare the report cards of each party's proposed leader. The SP's Mulayam and BSP's Mayawati both face corruption cases, while Kalyan Singh has never been charged. Singh is promising to restore a corruption free, efficient government that will address crucial bread and

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butter and infrastructure needs of the people and the state. He is also promising to restore law and order and stop appeasing minorities (read Muslims). Playing on his name and the Hindu word for welfare, he is promising to restore "kalyan" (welfare) to the state.

RAM TEMPLE

¶4. (C) Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Kalyan Singh's campaign is his promise to construct a Ram temple in Ayodhya. The 1992 demolition of the Babri Mosque, which stood on the disputed site, caused widespread communal rioting throughout the country and made it a flashpoint for Hindu-Muslim tensions. BJP leaders credit the Ayodhya campaign with the BJP's rise to power at the Center. The current support for the temple indicates that the BJP has decided to embrace a Hindutva (Hindu Nationalist) agenda again to win in UP and return to power eventually in New Delhi. Singh, however, is hedging his bets by couching the Ram temple as a cultural issue rather than a political one.

BJP VOTE BANK GETTING PARCELED OUT

¶5. (C) The media reports that BJP leaders claim that the party does not consider the SP, BSP, or Congress as significant threats. Despite this, to achieve the impossible and consolidate the Hindu vote, the BJP will have to contend with the BSP's new strategy of targeting Brahmin and Muslim voters (refs A & B). BSP leader Mayawati has announced a list of 403 candidates that includes 89 Brahmins and 61 Muslims. Though she formerly chanted derogatory campaign slogans against Brahmins, they seem to be forgotten today, making Mayawati and her party the strongest contender. Now, Brahmin voters have two strategies: voting for a Brahmin to ensure greater representation; and not voting for the SP in races where no Brahmin is a realistic candidate. The BJP has not yet released its list of candidates, which contacts have

told us includes only 50 Brahmins. The BJP needs to pick up the pace and release a list with more Brahmin candidates if it plans to capture one of its largest Hindu vote banks in the state (10 percent of the population).

¶6. (SBU) Additionally, cutting into the BJP's targeted vote bank is the recent defection of Gorakhpur MP Yogi Adityanath, after the BJP leadership rejected his list of 24-30 candidates. Adityanath has a following among a religious sect of Hindus, who are upper caste but not Brahmins. His following, both political and religious are based in Eastern UP. After negotiations with the BJP failed, Adityanath decided to split from the party and contest approximately 70 seats independently. In the likely event of a hung assembly, his support represents a significant chip off the BJP block. News reports project that Adityanath could take as many as 15 seats away from the BJP.

POST-ELECTION COALITION POSSIBILITIES

¶7. (C) On March 21, Sanjaya Baru, Media Advisor to the Prime Minister spoke candidly with visiting Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli about UP and potential post election scenarios.

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Baru reaffirmed that the BJP intends to stress "anti-minorityism" to consolidate the anti-Muslim vote (reftel A). According to Baru, the BJP secretly intends to form a coalition government with the SP of Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav after the election. He maintained that the BJP hopes Muslims will stick with the SP and not switch to Congress, as this would strengthen a BJP/SP coalition.

¶8. (C) In a March 30 meeting with Poloff, Congress MP Rashid Alvi echoed Baru's assessment, stating that he suspects that the SP and BJP have come to an understanding. Alvi, who knows all the UP players intimately, stated that CM Yadav is terrified that Mayawati will come to power and "destroy" him.

Alvi claimed that the BJP has offered Mulayam protection from prosecution and harassment, but only if he agrees to support a BJP government "from outside." Under such an arrangement, the SP would not have access to ministries or public funds. Alvi stressed that Mulayam would have to be absolutely desperate to accept such a deal, as it would destroy his political career. The SP's Muslim support base would disappear overnight, making it all but impossible for Mulayam ever to become Chief Minister again.

¶9. (C) Alvi revealed that Congress is hoping that the election outcome will be so indecisive as to prevent any party from forming the government. In such an event, Congress is prepared to ask for six months of President's rule. Alvi has purportedly told Rahul Gandhi that given six months, Congress can jail all the criminals associated with the SP and gain the gratitude of the UP voters, reviving Congress and giving it a clear chance to return to power in UP.

THE SMALLER FISH: MUNICIPAL DELHI ELECTIONS

¶10. (SBU) Complicating the UP scenario, just across the Yamuna, Delhites will go to municipal polls on April 5, with results announced on April 7. According to a recent poll conducted by the BJP's Pioneer newspaper and the Pioneer Media School, the top three issues voters are concerned about are: inflation, the recent handling of shops being sealed in residential zones (reftel C & D), and corruption. The poll also predictably indicates the BJP will capture control of the Delhi Municipal government with 62% of the vote. With inflation impacting peoples' lives daily and the badly handled sealing drive continuing to impact the lives of traders, and Sheila Dixit suffering from anti-incumbency, the BJP is expected to sail to victory in the capitol.

COMMENT: IRRATIONAL EXUBERANCE

¶11. (C) We cannot comment on the veracity of the persistent UP rumors and scenarios, but suspect that negotiations are in progress between the SP and BJP, as this would explain the BJP's seemingly irrational confidence that it will form the next government in Lucknow.

¶12. (C) Should the BJP and SP fail to capture enough seats to make an SP/BJP arrangement feasible, we believe the BJP would be more than happy to sit in the opposition in UP, hoping for Mayawati to self destruct (reftel B). Both Baru

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and Alvi agreed that anything can happen in UP. Whereas most states have just two principal political parties, UP has four, negating the "anti-incumbency factor" that is usually a determining factor in election results.

¶13. (C) While the BJP is perhaps overly confident regarding its prospects in UP, according to news reports, it is running a sharp, well organized campaign that could bring some tangible returns. According to our UP contacts, the BJP seems to be running a close second place with the SP and could possibly relegate the once-powerful SP to third position. The BSP is most likely to capture the first slot, with Congress coming in at the bottom. Even if the BJP is not part of the ruling government in UP, it will carry many advantages while in the opposition, especially if the BSP wins and cannot keep its house in order (reftel B). The BJP's real goal is not to capture power in Lucknow, but rather in New Delhi, and its every move is made with that goal in mind.

¶14. (C) In Delhi, all arrows point toward a BJP victory. Should things go the BJP's way in Delhi and UP, the BJP will direct its attention to upcoming elections in Goa and Gujarat (scheduled for May and December, respectively). The party hopes that a string of election victories in state contests (in addition to Bihar, Punjab, and Uttarakhand) will create sufficient momentum to propel it to victory in the 2009 national elections. END COMMENT

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